

The Ballarat Naturalist

DECEMBER 2010



EXCURSION REPORT SUNDAY 7TH NOVEMBER 2010

The first two stops were in Clarke's Rd/Monmouth Rd Enfield, where participants were given a list of plants to help them know what they might see (at each stopping point during the day). Apart from 12 species of orchids, Elspeth's additions took the final list for these two sites to over 56 other native plants plus a few weeds and an Oriole was heard calling (but not seen).



Grevillea Bedgoodiana

Thanks to Bill Murphy keeping everybody moving along we were able to fit in another stop at Sleeps Track off Misery Creek Rd on our way to lunch. This stop had 40 or 50 plants in flower including some spectacular *Arachnorchis tentaculata* (*Caladenia tentaculata*) Eastern Mantis orchid.

Lunch was at Surface Point and included a short walk to look at *Calochilus robertsonii*, Red beard orchid; *Dillwynia sericea*, Showy parrot-pea; *Eucalyptus dives*, Broad-leaf peppermint and a few others.



At Beacon Hill

The final stop for the day was at Bald Hill/Beacon Hill with the aircraft navigation beacon on its summit. Here again there was a huge range of plants in flower (40+ species) including at least three species of blue flowered sun orchids. There may have been more but you need to sit down with the reference book and pull flowers apart, in some cases with a micrometer to measure the various parts, in order to sort out the species. One interesting orchid here appeared to be a hybrid between *Thelymitra ixiodes* and *T. rubra*, known as *Thelymitra X irregularis*. My reference book only shows this occurring east of Melbourne – is this a new siting that extends its range?

Thanks to Bill Murphy for leading the day and Elaine and John Gregurke for assisting with the reconnaissance.

Paul Norquay

Photographs—Elspeth Swan

CRESWICK EXCURSION
SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2010

Eight Field Nats travelled out Gillies Road to Long Point Flora Reserve. There was a mass of white flowered Trigger Plants *Stylidium* sp2, only a few plants had pink flowers and this did not seem to be due to age of flowers. Other plants flowering included Pink Bells *Tetratheca ciliata*, Drooping Mistletoe *Amyema miquelii*, Tiger Orchid *Diuris sulphurea*,



Tiger Orchid

Button Everlasting *Helichrysum scorpioides* and Showy Parrot-pea *Dillwynia sericea*. Striated Thornbills nesting in hollows on the eastern escarpment. Several old Silver Banksia *Banksia marginata* have died but there is good regeneration of seedling.

We enjoyed morning tea at St Georges Lake and then walked to the spillway where sand bags were still in place following the floods in September. Flood debris could be seen. Some areas are still closed due to flood and storm damage.

Birds were active along the creek at Cabbage Tree. We saw the migratory Satin Flycatcher (male), White-naped Honeyeater, Crimson Rosella, Grey Fantail and Yellow Robin. Unfortunately the Sacred Kingfisher seen the

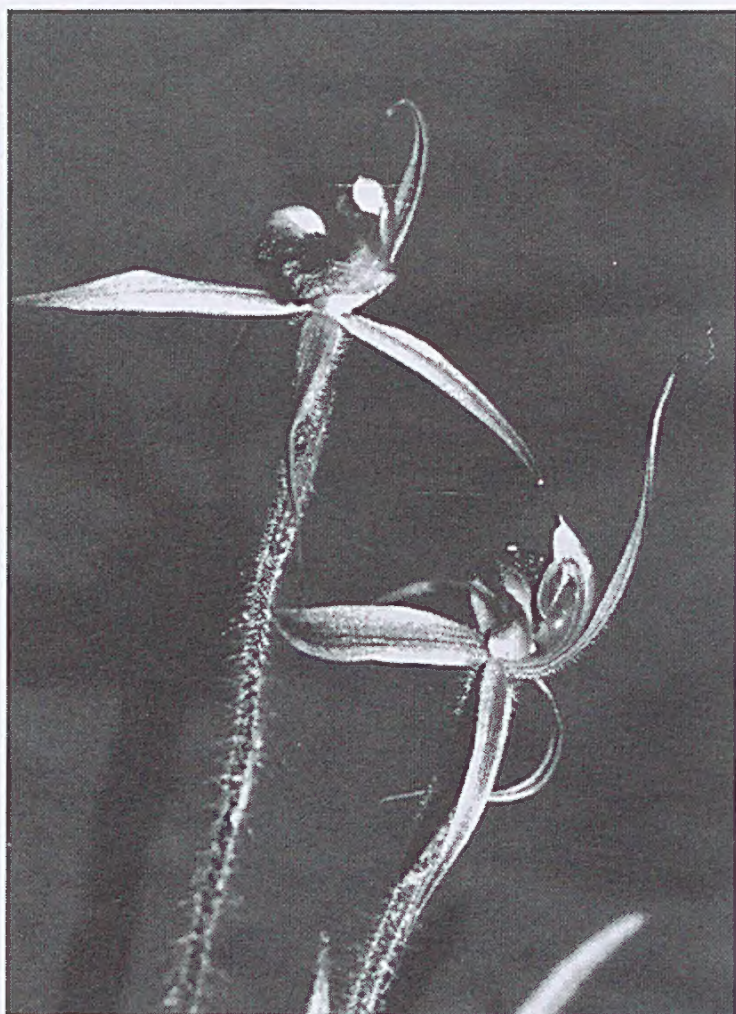
previous day was not present.

After lunch at Slatey Creek we inspected the sites of 2 quadrat surveys carried out in June 2009. In both areas 5 or 6 species were identified which were not seen last year showing that seasonal variation occurs.

Along White Swan Road we stopped to look at the Leafy Bitter-pea *Daviesia mimosoides*, which is uncommon in the local area.

The excursion concluded with people picking Broad Beans in Wendouree.

John Gregurke



Caladenia phaeoclavia
Brown clubbed spider

Platylobium obtusangulum



Photographs—Carol Hall

REMEMBERING LYNDsay FINK

Lyndsay Fink passed away at 2am on Sunday 14 November 2010. The book *The Story of a Small Town – a Story of Meredith* compiled by Lyndsay Fink was launched in Meredith at 1.30pm that afternoon. People were shocked to learn of Lyndsay's sudden death when it was announced at the beginning of the book launch.

Lyndsay joined the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat when he moved to Meredith in the mid 1970's. He served on the committee for over 20 years and held the offices of Vice-president and Secretary. He was Newsletter Editor for several years and shared his knowledge by compiling crosswords and writing many articles for the newsletter including a series of articles on mammals found in the Ballarat area under the non-de-plume of Elfin. He was a frequent contributor of field reports and items of interest for "Show and Tell".

The committee often held summer committee meetings at the Fink's home in Meredith. Lyndsay would proudly lead committee members on a tour of his garden before the meeting commenced. Lyndsay developed a thorough knowledge of the Brisbane Ranges when working as a ranger in the national park. He lead many excursions to his favourite spots in the Brisbane Ranges, Bamganie Forest and other areas around Meredith. He showed us the nest site of Peregrine Falcons and occurrences of unusual plants.

In 1999 he received the Club's Award of Merit for his outstanding service to Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat.

Club members remember Lyndsay as a naturalist who was willing to share his knowledge of nature and history. We extend our sympathy to his wife, Lorraine, his daughters and extended family.

John Gregurke

STELLA BEDGGOOD MEMORIAL LECTURE

The 32nd annual Stella Bedggood Memorial lecture on the 5th November was given by Tony Wilson. Tony is a naturalist and photographer in his spare time, and he gave us a marvellous presentation entitled "Rivers to Nowhere" referring to rivers that do not run to the sea. Our journey with the splendour of digital photography began on the Bulloo River that starts north of Quilpie and carries $\frac{3}{4}$ of teralitre of water a year. A teralitre is a cubic kilometre of water. Tony introduced us to the term, braided river, which refers to the way rivers spread out like a whole lot of ribbons.

In Australian river systems, waterholes are critical, as most of our rivers do not flow for most of the time.

Waterholes have wonderful wildlife and through Tony's excellent photography, we caught a glimpse of what a traveller may see. Young black kites, red kangaroos, euros and chestnut rumped thornbills, which are very common. Being a keen naturalist with lots of patience Tony managed to photograph the thornbill near its nest, which is a domed nest inside a hollow in a coolibah tree. The entrance was a flimsy piece of bark that served its purpose and would have broken off if a larger bird had alighted on it to raid the nest.

Photographed from a safe distance was a small Scale Snake. Its toxic venom could have killed all the people in the meeting room, 4 times over. They do not have to chase their prey; they just bite it and wait for it to die. Some of the birds that observed include pied honeyeaters, brown falcons, apostle birds, crested bellbirds and crimson chats. *Eucalyptus coolabah*, coolibah tree, is found on the cracking clay or silty soils that are periodically flooded, riverbanks and flood plains and swampy areas.

We moved on to the Eyre Basin. It is the fourth biggest basin in the world that does not connect to the ocean. Endorheic basins meaning closed drainage basins. Using NASA satellite imagery we were able to view some of these basins including the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Lake Chad and the Aral Sea. The Georgina, Diamantina and Cooper are three rivers that reach Lake Eyre while many others do not.

Moving from Europe back to Australia we were back to Lake Hart and a picture of a storm west of the MacDonnell Ranges and the headwaters of the Finke River. On the Paroo like many other rivers, there are weirs where the road crosses. Travellers who do not venture far off the bitumen get the impression that there is always water in the rivers when they

glimpse these weirs. They do not understand that further up from the weir the riverbed is probably dry and remains so for most of the year. It is hard to convince them that rivers need water.

Tony uses a fish eye lens for some of his shots. He commented that this piece of equipment is often misused and the art is to put the horizon in the middle of the picture. He captured through his camera splendid fairy wrens, rufous song larks, chats, black tailed native hens, little friar birds, variegated fairy wrens, spotted bowerbirds, a wedge tailed eagle and black shouldered kite. These are all birds you would expect to see in the area but what is surprising is the numbers of individuals.

Closer to home we looked at the Avoca River. It generally does not have enough flow to reach the Murray River. It has to be a very wet year. We see black box rather than red gums. The variable flow is mainly due to not much runoff. It one of the few rivers in Victoria that doesn't have dams on the river itself. The Avoca runs into Lake Bael Bael. This area after so many years of drought is now a good place for birding now.

The Wimmera River is the last one on our journey to nowhere. It is the biggest river in north west Victoria and starts closer to home near Ben Nevis. Much of the water for irrigation used to flow through open channels, but has now been put into pipes, which has meant much water now reaches its destination.

This report covers only a very small part of the presentation but Tony covered a lot of territory and many aspects of these rivers that we often do not get a chance to see ourselves. We thanked Tony for a thoughtful and interesting talk with beautiful bird and landscape photography. We only scraped the surface of his picture collection and knowledge so we look forward to inviting him back to talk to us again.

Elsbeth Swan

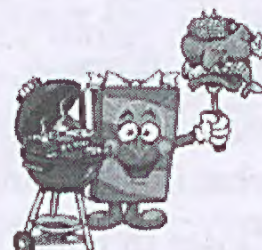


We wish you all a
Very Happy Christmas
and all good wishes for the
coming year.

CALENDAR 2010/11

DECEMBER

- Fri 3 Rod Orr, Bendigo Field Naturalists Club—*Canning Stock Route*
- Sun 5 *Water Reserves Excursion and Picnic Tea* - afternoon/early evening.
Meet at 1.30pm
- Fri 17 *Christmas Break-up at*
Bring a salad or sweet to share. Bring your own
meat, plates cutlery, drinks glasses and chair.
Barbecue, tea and coffee supplied. 6pm



2011

JANUARY

- Tues 25 Committee Meeting, 7.30pm,

FEBRUARY

- Fri 4 Stephen Murphy, Environmentalist & Nurseryman—*Designing Sustainable Re-vegetation.*
- Sun 6 *Inverleigh Flora & Fauna Reserve, Friends of Inverleigh F&F Reserve*

Committee

President..... Ms Elspeth Swan
Vice-President..... Mr Greg Binns
Secretary..... Mr John Gregurke
Treasurer..... Mr Les Hanrahan

Mrs Claire Dalman
Mr Peter Dalman
Dr Frances Hanrahan

Mrs Carol Hall
Mrs Val Hocking.....
Ms Nina Netherway (editor)

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Editor: Nina Netherway,

Website: www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au Click on *Community>Local Clubs> Environment*

Meetings are held at the Prince of Wales Park Clubrooms in Prince of Wales Park, Gillies St on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Leave from the carpark adjacent to BGS & BHS boatsheds at the south end of Forest St., Wendouree.

A monthly publication of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.
Incorporation # A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135